

Submitter: Janet Vaughan
On Behalf Of: Pearl Buck Center
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure: HB2457

Janet Vaughan
Springfield, OR 97478

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Good morning,

I am employed at Pearl Buck Center in Eugene Oregon. I work with Intellectually and developmentally disabled adults in the day program. These are adults that want to socialize with their peers, and most don't have jobs. Our clients want to keep busy, learn new things, socialize, and enjoy time outside of their homes. As a Direct Support Professional (DSP), I have chosen to take on a big responsibility. Yes, many aspects of the job are fun, and enable me to be creative, and involve some activity. That's just a small piece of the day in the life of a DSP.

When a client arrives at Pearl Buck Center, they are greeted with a smile and are then assisted with anything they may need. This can include help getting to a seat because they can't see to get there alone, or they struggle walking due to a medical condition and need someone to support them. This might be having someone to listen to them as they talk about something troubling them. Some might need help getting situated in the bathroom or need other toileting assistance. A few clients are unable to vocalize their needs, so we learn signals over time about what they mean when they do certain things. Due to certain medical issues our clients have specific dietary needs, and some must have their food prepped in a specific manner before they can eat it to avoid choking. This is our responsibility.

Throughout the day I must assure the safety of each client, and make sure that they all get attention. I

want them to know they are welcome to join in on any activity going on, and make sure that they get assistance with the activity should they need it. I always want them to leave the center feeling good about themselves and know that they are cared about. My joy during the day comes from making them smile and hearing them laugh. I treat them as if they were my own parents, or as I would want my parents to be treated.

There is as problem in making all this work. Due to the low pay, we receive as DSP's, many people opt to work in other fields or leave their job to get the money required to survive. As a DSP we're required to complete training and classes to become certified. We must also be CPR and first aid certified and go through background checks before we can be hired. Even after all this our pay begins at \$15.00 an hour. This leaves us shorthanded most days, my co-workers burn out and after a while of working this way, they leave too. This is hard on everyone involved, and especially hard on our clients. They learn to trust people, grow close to them, look forward to seeing them, and suddenly they are gone. Their feelings are hurt, and they blame themselves.

Please consider raising the pay of DSP workers. We love what we do and want to continue doing it. This is not a reality though for many of us making less than a fast-food employee. I earned a bachelor's degree in Social Work and owe \$20,000.00. At \$15.00 an hour, I am lucky to pay my rent. Pass HB 2457.

Sincerely,
Janet Vaughan